



SERICULUS CHRYSOCEPHALUS.



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## Regent Bird.

*Meliphaga chrysocephala*, Lewin, Birds of New Holl., pl. 1.

*Golden-crowned Honey-eater*, Lath. Gen. Hist., vol. iv. p. 184.

*Oriolus regens*, Temm. Pl. Col., 320.—Quoy et Gaim. Zool. de l'Uranie, pl. 22.—Less. Zool. de Coquille, pl. 20 (female).

*Sericulus chrysocephalus*, Swains. in Zool. Journ., vol. i. p. 478.—Vig. and Horsf. in Linn. Trans., vol. xv. p. 326.

—Jard. and Selb. Ill. Orn., vol. i. pls. 18, 19, 20.—G. R. Gray, List of Gen. of Birds, 2nd edit., p. 38.

—Swains. Class. of Birds, vol. ii. p. 237.—Less. Traité d'Orn., p. 340.—Steph. Cont. of Shaw's Gen. Zool., vol. xiv. p. 266.

*Sericulus regens*, Less. Man. d'Orn., tom. i. p. 256.

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THIS beautiful species, one of the finest birds of the Australian Fauna, is, I believe, exclusively confined to the eastern portion of the country; it is occasionally seen in the neighbourhood of Sydney, which appears to be the extent of its range to the southward and westward. I met with it in the brushes at Maitland in company and feeding on the same trees with the Satin and Cat Birds and the *Oriolus viridis*; it is still more abundant on the Manning, at Port Macquarrie, and at Moreton Bay; I sought for and made every inquiry respecting it at Illawarra, but did not encounter it, and was informed that it is never seen there, yet the district is precisely similar in character to those in which it is abundant about two degrees to the eastward: while encamped on Mosquito Island, near the mouth of the river Hunter, I shot several, and observed it to be numerous on the neighbouring islands, particularly Baker's Island, where there is a fine garden, and where it is one of the greatest pests the proprietor has to contend with; for during the summer months, when the peaches and other fruits are ripening, it commits serious injury to the crops and their owner.

Although I have spoken of this bird as abundant in the various localities referred to, I must mention that at least fifty out of colour may be observed to one fully-plumaged male, which when adorned in its gorgeous livery of golden yellow and deep velvety black exhibits an extreme shyness of disposition, as if conscious that its beauty, rendering it a conspicuous object, might lead to its destruction; it is usually therefore very quiet in its actions, and mostly resorts to the topmost branches of the trees; but when two gay-coloured males encounter each other, frequent conflicts take place. To obtain specimens in their full dress, considerable caution is necessary; on the other hand, females and immature males are very tame, and when feeding among the foliage, appear to be so intent upon their occupation as not to heed the approach of an intruder; and I have occasionally stood beneath a low tree, not more than fifteen feet high, with at least ten feeding voraciously above me. The stomachs of those dissected contained the remains of wild figs, berries and seeds, but no trace of insects.

I did not succeed in discovering the nest, or in obtaining any information respecting it.

I believe that the fine plumage represented in the Plate is not assumed until the second or third year, and when once acquired is not afterwards thrown off; it may be thus described:—

Head and back of the neck, running in a rounded point towards the breast, rich bright gamboge-yellow tinged with orange, particularly on the centre of the forehead; the remainder of the plumage, with the exception of the secondaries and inner webs of all but the first primary, deep velvety black; the secondaries bright gamboge-yellow, with a narrow edging of black along the inner webs; the first primary is entirely black, the next have the tips and outer webs black—the half of the inner web and that part of the shaft not running through the black tip are yellow; as the primaries approach the secondaries the yellow of the inner web extends across the shaft, leaving only a black edge on the outer web, which gradually narrows until the tips only of both webs remain black; bill yellow; irides pale yellow; legs and feet black.

The female has the head and throat dull brownish white, with a large patch of deep black on the crown; all the upper surface, wings and tail pale olive-brown, the feathers of the back with a triangular-shaped mark of brownish white near the tip; the under surface is similar, but here, except on the breast, the white markings increase so much in size as to become the predominant hue; irides brown; bill and feet black.

The young males at first resemble the females, but their hues are continually changing until they gain the livery of the adult.

The Plate represents a male and a female on a branch of one of the wild figs of the brushes of New South Wales, all the size of life.